Translated into 58 different languages (including 23 from Asia), this letter, written by Brother Roger of Taizé, was made public during the young adult European meeting in Paris. It will be a starting-point for reflection throughout the year 2003 during the weekly meetings in Taizé as well as those held in other parts of the world.

Letter from Taizé

February – March 2003 Bimonthly 0,50 euro 1

A God Who Simply Loves

Letter 2003

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All across the world, many among the younger generations are searching and asking themselves: is there any hope for our future? How can we go from worry to confident trust?

Our societies are sometimes shaken to their foundations. There is the uncertain future of humanity, with poverty constantly on the rise. There is the suffering of so many children, and all the broken relationships that leave hearts wounded.

And yet, even in the world's most troubled situations, do we not see on the horizon signs of an undeniable hope?

In order to go forward, it is good to know this: the Gospel offers such a shining hope that it can bring joy to our soul.

This hope is a path of light that opens up in our depths. Without it, all delight in living could vanish.

Where is the source of this hope? It is in God, a God who simply loves and can do nothing else,[1] a God who never stops seeking us.

Our hope is renewed when we entrust ourselves humbly to God.[2]

There is a force which dwells within us and which is the same for everyone. This force is called the Holy Spirit, and

1. "All God can do is love": this conviction was expressed by a Christian thinker of the seventh century, Saint Isaac of Nineveh. He reached this conclusion after studying Saint John's Gospel for many years and meditating on the words "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Today more than ever it is important to remember that suffering never comes from God. God is not the author of evil; God wants neither human distress, nor natural disasters, nor violent accidents, nor wars. God shares the pain of all who are undergoing times of trial and enables us to comfort those who are suffering.

2. At all times, everyone can make this simple prayer their own, saying it over and over in their hearts: "My soul finds rest and peace in God alone" (Psalm 62:1).

whispers in our hearts, "Surrender yourself to God in all simplicity; the little faith you have is enough."[3]

But who is this Holy Spirit? He is the one Christ Jesus promised in his Gospel when he said, "I will never abandon you. I will always be with you through the Holy Spirit, who will support and comfort you."[4]

Even when we think we are alone, the Holy Spirit is with us. His presence is invisible, yet it never leaves us.[5]

And gradually we realize that the most important thing in life is to love with trust.

Trust is one of the humblest and simplest realities that exist, and at the same time one of the most basic.

When we love with trust we bring happiness to people around us, and we remain in communion with those who have gone before us and who are waiting for us in God's eternity.

When times of doubt arise in some people's lives, we should keep in mind that doubt and trust, like shadow and light, can coexist within us.[6]

Above all let us remember these reassuring words of Christ: "Do not be afraid or let your heart be troubled."[7]

Then it becomes clear that faith is not the result of effort, but is a gift from God. It is God who enables us day after day to leave our hesitations behind and move towards trust in him.

All God can do is love, and his compassion is a source of life. May the day come when we can say, "God of mercy, even if we had the faith to move mountains, without your love what would we be?[8] Yes, your love for each one of us remains for ever."

One of the clearest expressions of God's love is forgiveness.

When we forgive in our turn, little by little our life changes.

Finding in forgiveness a breath of joy, we see all forms of severity towards others fade away; it is essential for harsh

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3. A century after Christ, a believer named Irenaeus, from Lyons, had the clear certainty of a communion in God. He left these lines: "The splendour of God is a human being fully alive. The life of human beings consists in the contemplation of God."

4. See John 14:16-20.

5. Even if at times we are less aware of the Holy Spirit's presence, we can always find in him the support and the consolation with which God comes to flood our lives. Could it happen that we forget the presence of the Holy Spirit within us? As we rest in him, we find him wherever we are—at home, at work, in a life filled with activities…

6. We already find this in the Gospel, where we see a man say to Christ, "I believe." But he immediately adds, "Come and help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

7. John 14:1.

8 See 1 Corinthians 13:2.

9. See Baruch 5:1-9.

10. Joy, which can sometimes be as light as a feather, is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us (see Galatians 5:22). Joy causes us to marvel. It allows us to discover life's poetry in every season, in days of brightness as well as in frozen winter nights.

11. In the Bible, hope is not a creation of the imagination; it is rooted in the presence of God that will never be lacking: "I have for you, says the Lord, plans of peace and not of misfortune, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). This hope is sure: "There is a future, and your hope will not be cut off" (Proverbs 23:18). The New Testament goes further still, viewing hope as a reality that is already at work in our lives: "Our hope will not disappoint us, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit that was given to us"(Romans 5:5).

Pope John Paul II

To Brother Roger of Taizé

Dear Brother, for twenty-five years now, the Taizé Community has been organizing a yearly stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth"; it offers the possibility to young European Christians, but also to those from other continents, to have a intense experience of faith and of brotherhood and in this way to respond to the call of Christ, who wants to communicate his joy to the young, to reveal to them his face and his presence, and to help them make their life a beautiful journey to the Father, so that they can develop all their talents and commit themselves to serve their brothers and sisters in the places where they live. The Pope greets warmly the young people who have responded to your invitation and who are meeting this year in Paris and in the dioceses of Ile-de-France, assuring them of his fervent prayer.

This gathering is a sign of hope for our world. It shows that the young of today are thirsting for truth, happiness, beauty and for an absolute, and that they are striving to give meaning to their lives. The Holy Father invites the young to return to Christ, who trusts them and who wants to help them on life's road. May they also let themselves be led by the Holy Spirit, so that all their decisions may be in harmony with their deepest selves, which is created in the image and likeness of God. Sons of God and Brothers of Jesus, they are called to live according to the love which has been placed in their hearts. In this way they will discover the greatness and the beauty of their life, of every life, the joy that there is in giving themselves by fulfilling their human and Christian calling, by proclaiming the Gospel by their entire lives and by taking part in the building up of society.

The Pope encourages them to return constantly to the source of every gift, Christ himself, with whom they will find the strength necessary for their daily mission. In regular prayer, by reading the Scriptures diligently, by a strong sacramental life, the young will encounter Christ, who will show them the Father's face of kindly love and who will manifest his presence to them throughout their lives. Like the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 1:11), they will have their eyes open to see the new dawn arise—hope in a future of justice and peace, of love and reconciliation, gifts of God for our earth, towards the development of which each person has to make their contribution.

Through the intercession of Our Lady, of Saint Genevieve and Saint Denis, the Pope asks God to bless the young people who are taking part in the meeting, the Taizé Community and all those who have prepared and are facilitating the gathering, as well as the dioceses, parishes and families who are welcoming the participants.

The Secretary General of the United Nations. Mr. Kofi Annan

Dear friends of Taizé and young people from the entire world, it is with great pleasure that I send my warm greetings to you all on the occasion of this twenty-fifth young adult European meeting organized at the initiative of the Taizé Community.

I am happy that you have come by the thousands, as every year, from throughout Europe and from other continents, to set out together to discover signs of hope and to reflect on the wellsprings of your faith and your involvement in society.

In this world where at times it seems that intolerance is gaining ground each day, your meeting offers a powerful message of tolerance and solidarity. May the faith that unites you help you to bring this message beyond your own community! There are so many young people in the world who are deprived of prospects for the future. For them, each day is a bitter struggle against starvation, illness and misery. In addition, many live in regions which are prey to armed conflicts. We have to do everything to give them hope, and each of you has a role to play.

It is in this spirit that I wish you a fruitful meeting. All my best wishes are with you for this new stage of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth."

Patriarch Bartholomeos of Constantinople

We address to you Saint Paul's recommendation: "Always be joyful, pray unceasingly, in all circumstances give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Be joyful, therefore, for this opportunity given to you to share among yourselves and with that tireless worker for the Gospel and friend of youth, Brother Roger, and with his brothers. Pray unceasingly for him, for us, for each of yourselves.

Pray, too, for the unity of the Church and for reconciliation of human beings with God and among themselves. Pray for peace throughout the world, a world again in danger. Pray for the protection of nature, damaged by human greed and irresponsibility.

Give thanks to God and to your parents who gave you life. The Church blesses human labor and progress, which help us better to understand the wonders of the world which God's love created for human beings.

Today, God is giving the young extraordinary opportunities to become his collaborators for the purpose of bettering the quality of life and ensuring the advancement of society, in which justice, gentleness, tolerance, brotherhood and solidarity will reign.

We extend to you our paternal blessing and our best wishes that the new year be blessed for you by God.

Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow

I greet warmly the young Christians who are together for the twenty-fifty European meeting in Paris.

Today, while the forces of evil are threatening people across the world, sowing hatred and death, we need to come together for reconciliation among those who belong to different cultures and denominations. You are called to share a common responsibility in strengthening justice, concord and mutual respect. We must respond to

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JOHANNINE HOURS

March : Hosea 2:16-17

"All God can do is love." Few believers have known this as well as the prophet Hosea, even though he lived eight centuries before Christ. Hosea discovered this truth and expressed it in his life as a prophet. Although several prophets made use of symbols, the symbol Hosea chose was quite dramatic and intense. To express God's relationship with the people, Hosea was asked to take a prostitute for his wife and to love her. He had to bear her unfaithfulness. What was the prophet thinking about? Political alliances with other nations? Perhaps even more than that, the fact that Israel continually turned to other gods to ensure the fertility of the land, of their flocks and their families.

There is also anger in Hosea. It explodes in chapter 2. God can take it no more. He has done all he can for this nation and yet they always turn to others. The reasons for this anger are mentioned three times, in the form of a lawsuit. And each time, the appropriate punishment is expressed by the formula: "that is why." For the third and final summing up of Israel's unfaithfulness, the reader expects that the punishment mentioned will be even greater. And instead we find these words: "That is why I am going to allure her, to lead her into the desert and to speak tenderly to her .... And she will respond as in the days of her youth" (2:14-17). And in the following chapter, we see Hosea take back his unfaithful wife and love her as she is.

Jesus, whom the Gospels refer to as the "Bridegroom," liked to quote Hosea. During a meal with sinners, a celebration where there was no fasting because the Bridegroom was present, Jesus justified his behavior by recalling God's words in Hosea: "Love is what I desire, not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). He did not come to accuse his people. In him there is "more than a prophet."—someone who can give a brand-new love to all.

- What does the symbolism of marriage, which Hosea is the first to use, tell us about God?
- Why does Hosea announce a promise where we would expect to find a punishment? What has he understood about God?

April : Matthew 5:1

"Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on a mountainside. He sat down, and his disciples came up to him. Opening his mouth, he taught them."

This is the verse that introduces the Beatitudes. Why, before listening to this essential text, and the entire Sermon on the Mount that will follow, are we asked to look at Christ? Undoubtedly because, for Matthew, the Beatitudes are not a philosophy, an abstract message, a teaching which could hold its own even without the presence of Jesus. The Beatitudes are only true because Jesus is there. And he is there first of all for the poor, for those who weep, those who have no room this earth. If he is there for them, then they can be called happy.

In mentioning the crowd, the Gospel wants us to understand that what is said applies to everyone, not just a religious elite. But by adding, "his disciples came up to him," he completes and nuances what he has just affirmed. What is said is meant for all, but to the extent that we come close to Christ, that we set out and follow him. The truth of the Beatitudes only appears for those who run the risk to live them out.

Jesus himself is the first to live out this risk. If we open ourselves to this text, we will not find abstract truths, but the light of a face, God's own commitment and way of being present and of acting. Christ is the true poor man, totally dependent on his Father and in whom the Kingdom is found. He is the one who has nowhere to lay his head and to whom the earth belongs, the being with the greatest compassion, pure of heart, peacemaker. Christ's teaching cannot be separated from his person.

- What changes when we understand the link between Christ's teaching and his presence among us?
- How can we understand that the word "happy" is used in the Beatitudes, where we would not spontaneously use that word?

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

If we do not unite around Christ, we cannot resist the spirit of this world—individualism, consumerism, divisions and conflicts. To conquer evil, it is up to us to transfigure the contemporary world by the truth of the Gospel; it is up to us to follow Christ. My wish is that you may walk along this road and I remind you that "your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

May the light of Christian hope shine in your young hearts as you search for unity and collaboration among the Christians of Europe and the world.

The Archbishop of Canterbury

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, recently retired from his charge and his successor has not yet begun to serve. Primate of the Anglican Communion, throughout his ministry Archbishop Carey always showed himself very attentive to the young adult meetings in Taizé. He came to Taizé in the summer of 1992 with 1000 young Anglicans from different countries, and upon his arrival he said, "The divisions between Christians are a burden that I bear; they need to be healed. I believe in reconciliation with the Catholic Church and I would like to see it happen in my lifetime."

Letter from Taizé

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Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

Jesus our peace, you call us to follow you our whole life long. And so, with humble trust, we understand that you invite us to keep welcoming you again and again.

Ep 2:14-18

1 Sat Christ came to announce the joyful message of peace: peace to those who are far away, peace to those who are near. Through him, in one Spirit, we all have free access to the Father.

2 Co 3:4-6

2 SUN God has made us able to serve a new covenant, one which is not of written letters but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Ps 94:14-22

3 Mon When I say, "I am slipping," your faithful love, Lord, supports me.

Jr 1:4-8

4 Tue The Lord said to Jeremiah: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and consecrated you.

Ps 51

5 Wed ASH WEDNESDAY O God, you desire truth in the inward being. Create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Ph 1:20-26

6 Thu Paul writes: Now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, to live is Christ.

Heb 5:1-10

7 Fri Jesus offered up prayer and entreaty to the one who could save him from death, he surrendered himself and he was heard.

Mt 19:16-22

8 Sat Jesus said to a rich young man: If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.

1 P 3:18-22

9 SUN Christ was put to death in the body and raised to life in the Spirit. And in the Spirit he also went to announce the Gospel to those who once had refused to believe.

Ps 40:7-12

10 Mon Here I am, I have come, and as it is written, I desire to do your will, my God. Your law is deep within my heart.

Rm 8:31-39

11 Tue Who could condemn us? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God, interceding for us.

Is 45:3-7

12 Wed The Lord says: Though you did not know me, I have called you by your name.

Lk 14:1-14

13 Thu Jesus said: When you have a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you.

Mk 1:21-28

14 Fri Jesus taught in the synagogue. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he spoke with authority.

2 Co 8:7-15

15 Sat Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor for your sake, so that through his poverty you might become rich.

Mk 9:2-10

16 SUN Jesus was transfigured in the presence of his disciples. And a cloud covered them with its shadow, and from the cloud a voice came, saying, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

Lk 10:25-37

17 Mon Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.

Heb 12:1-2

18 Tue Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

Mt 1:16-21

19 Wed St JOSEPH An angel said to Joseph: Mary will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Jn 10:11-18

20 Thu Jesus said: I am the good shepherd. My sheep will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

1 P 1:3-9

21 Fri Though you have not seen Christ Jesus, you love him. Still without seeing him you believe in him and so are already filled with a joy so glorious it cannot be described.

Jn 17:1-11

22 Sat Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying: Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one as we are one.

1 Co 1:22-25

23 SUN We proclaim Christ crucified, which to the nations is foolishness, but to those whom God has called it is Christ, the strength and the wisdom of God.

Jr 2:1-13

24 Mon The Lord said of his people: They have forsaken me, the fount of living water, and have dug themselves cracked cisterns that will not hold water.

Lk 1:26-38

25 Tue Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

Mt 4:1-11

26 Wed Jesus said to the tempter: Away with you! For Scripture says, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone".

Lk 22:24-27

27 Thu Jesus said to his disciples: Who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet I am among you as one who serves.

Rv 3:7-8

28 Fri Thus says the Lord: Though you are not very strong, you have kept my Word, and now I have opened before you a door that no one can close.

Mt 18:1-4

29 Sat Jesus said: Truly, I tell you, the one who becomes humble like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Jn 3:14-21

30 SUN Jesus said: Whoever acts according to the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he is doing is done in God.

Ba 5:1-9

31 Mon Leave behind your sadness and put on for ever the beauty of God's glory. For the Lord will guide you in joy, with the mercy and saving justice that come from him.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

MARCH

APRIL

Mt 5:13-16
1 Tue Jesus said to his disciples: You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden.

Jn 6:67-69
2 Wed Seeing that many of his disciples were turning away, Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about you, do you want to go away too?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Rv 21:5-7
3 Thu God says: I am the Beginning and the End. I shall give water from the well of life freely to anyone who is thirsty.

Ep 4:17-32
4 Fri Let yourselves be made new in the attitude of your minds and be clothed with the new self, which is created to be like God in justice and in holiness of the truth.

Jn 15:9-13
5 Sat Jesus said: This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

Jn 12:23-36
6 SUN Jesus said: When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to me.

Jn 9:1-41
7 Mon Jesus said to his disciples: We must do the work of the one who sent me, while the daylight lasts. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Ps 36
8 Tue In you, Lord, is the source of life; in your light we see light.

Jn 3:14-21
9 Wed God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him.

1 P 5:6-11
10 Thu Peter writes: Cast all your anxiety on God, because God cares for you.

Heb 4:14-16
11 Fri Jesus is well able to understand our weakness. He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin.

Ps 46
12 Sat God is our refuge and strength, and an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be in turmoil.

Jn 12:12-16
13 SUN PALM SUNDAY To enter Jerusalem, Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, "Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

Jn 12:20-30
14 Mon Jesus said: In truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it yields a big harvest.

Jn 16:20-22
15 Tue Before his passion, Jesus said to his disciples: Now you are sad, but I shall see you again and you hearts will be full of joy. And that joy no one shall take from you.

2 Co 1:8-11
16 Wed Paul writes: When overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

2 Co 5:13-17
17 Thu Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and was raised to life for them.

Lk 23:33-46
18 Fri GOOD FRIDAY The criminal crucified next to Jesus, said to him, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

1 Jn 2:7-10
19 Sat The darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. Whoever loves their neighbour remains in the light.

Jn 20:1-9
20 SUN EASTER DAY When Jesus' disciple entered the empty tomb, he saw and believed.

Mt 6:25-34
21 Mon Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life... Your Father in heaven knows what you need. Do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself.

Ws 1:1-3
22 Tue Seek God in simplicity of heart; for the Lord reveals himself to those who do not refuse him their trust.

Is 58:7-10
23 Wed If you do away with the accusing finger and malicious talk, if you give what is yours for the hungry, then your light will rise in the darkness and your darkest hour will be like the middle of the day.

Jm 1:17-27
24 Thu James writes: Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can give you life.

Mk 16:15-20
25 Fri St MARK Jesus sent out his disciples, saying: Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.

2 Co 12:1-10
26 Sat Paul writes: God said to me: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Jn 20:19-23
27 SUN The Risen Christ said to the disciples: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Heb 10:19-25
28 Mon Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and in fullness of faith. Let us hold to the hope we profess, without wavering, for the one who has promised is faithful.

2 Co 8:7-15
29 Tue Be generous, for you know the generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ who became poor for your sake.

Si 35:12-14,16-18 (35:14-22)
30 Wed God is utterly impartial. God never shows partiality to the detriment of the poor, but listens to the prayer of the one who is wronged.

Holy Spirit, even when our words are scarcely able to express our longing for communion with you, your invisible presence dwells within each of us, and joy can be offered to us.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

words and deeds to be replaced by boundless kindness.

Even before the time of Christ, a believer expressed this call: "Leave your sadness behind; let God lead you to joy."[9]

This joy heals the secret wound of the soul. It lies in the transparency of peaceful love, and needs our whole being in order to burst forth.[10]

Very many people today aspire to live in a time of trust and of hope.[11]

In human beings there can be impulses to violence. For trust to arise on earth we need to begin within ourselves, making our way forward with a reconciled heart, living in peace with those around us.

Peace on earth is prepared insofar as we dare to ask ourselves: am I ready to seek inner peace and to go forward in selflessness? Even if I have very little, can I be a ferment of trust in my own situation, understanding others more and more?

As we remain before God in quiet waiting, will we open ways of peacemaking wherever oppositions arise?[12]

When young people make a resolution for peace in their own life, they become bearers of a shining hope whose light radiates ever further outward.

At this time in history, the Gospel invites us to love and to say it by our existence. Faith becomes credible to those around us above all by the lives we lead.

This is also true for the mystery of communion that is the Body of Christ, his Church. A credibility that has often been lost can be reborn when the Church lives in trust, forgiveness and compassion, and when it welcomes with joy and simplicity. It then succeeds in communicating a living hope.[13]

When our personal prayer seems poor and our words awkward, we should not let this bring us to a standstill.[14]

Is not one of the deepest desires of our soul to live in communion with God?

12. Over the centuries, Christians have been plagued by a host of divisions. Will we commit ourselves today, without delay, to do all we can to live in communion with one another? For years now, the call for reconciliation among divided Christians has led to dialogues and to positive conversations. But we cannot put off reconciliation itself until the end of time. It is more urgent than ever before to enter upon the road which Christ points out in the Gospel. "First go and be reconciled" (Matthew 5:24). "First go!" he says, not "Put it off until later!"

Today there are men, women and young people deeply aware of how urgent it is for reconciliation to become a reality with no delay. In March 2002, Pope John Paul II called for "an ecumenism of holiness that will lead us finally to full communion." Then, in October 2002, the pope and the Orthodox patriarch Theoctist of Romania wrote a common declaration that underlined "our dedication to pray and to work to achieve the full and visible unity of all the disciples of Christ. Our aim and our ardent desire is full communion, which is not absorption but communion in truth and love."

13. Forty years ago, the man who perhaps had the deepest impact on our community at Taizé, Pope John XXIII, was able to find words that inspire us not to stop but to keep going forward. He said, for example, "The Church would rather make use of the medicine of mercy than the weapons of severity."

14. If some people find it hard to pray alone, the beauty of a sung prayer, even with just two or three people present, is an incomparable support for the inner life. Through simple words as well as singing that goes on and on, it can radiate joy. At Taizé and in meetings on different continents, we discover that a sung prayer with others allows the desire for God to well up in us and helps us enter into a contemplative prayer.

15. Saint Augustine also wrote these words: "If you desire to know God, then you already have faith."

Three centuries after Christ, an African believer by the name of Augustine wrote, "A desire that calls out to God is already a prayer. If you want to pray ceaselessly, then never stop desiring..."[15]

Great simplicity of heart sustains contemplative prayer. Simplicity is a source of joy.[16] It enables us to surrender ourselves to God, to allow ourselves to be led to him.

In this life of communion, God, who remains invisible, does not necessarily communicate with us by means of human words. God speaks above all by silent intuitions.[17]

Silence in prayer seems like nothing. And yet, in this silence the Holy Spirit can enable us to welcome God's joy, a joy which reaches down to touch the very depths of our soul.

In simple prayer, many people understand one day that God is calling them. What is God's call?

God wants us to prepare ourselves to be bearers of joy and peace.[18]

Will we listen to God when his words ring out in us: "Don't stop; keep going forward; let your soul live!"

Then we may realize that we have been created to head towards something infinite, something absolute. And we can make this discovery: it is sometimes in demanding situations that human beings become most fully themselves.

When we are supported by one another[19] and do not let ourselves be brought to a halt by obstacles, when we know where to find the courage to keep going forward, then we realize that there is heartfelt joy, and even sheer happiness, in responding to God's call. Yes, God wants happiness for us![20]

And then something we never dared hope for appears. We leave behind us the long nights with hardly a glimmer of light. Walking at times along ways of darkness, instead of weakening us, can even build us up within.

What means most to us is going from one discovery to another. Welcoming the coming day as God's today. Searching for peace of heart in all things. And life becomes beautiful... yes, life will be beautiful.

16. For my brothers and myself, searching for simplicity of heart and of life is more than ever at the center of our vocation, whether we are living at Taizé or in small groups among the very poor in the Southern continents. The more we go forward, the more we remember that we are poor people of the Gospel. And so we say, "Let us be people who listen, not spiritual masters!"

17. Speaking about prayer, Saint Augustine said, "Praying a lot does not mean praying with lots of words, as some people think... So let us not use a great many words when we pray, but let us take time to pray in the silence of our heart."

18. "We are called to go beyond the limits of our closed communities, to transcend our prejudices, hesitations and fears, and to witness to the risen Christ, as far as we can, to go to meet our contemporaries and the burning problems they have to deal with. This does not mean becoming indistinguishable from the world, but helping it find an orientation (...) to enable every human being to attain freedom and dignity." (Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, primate of the Orthodox Church of Albania)

19. Isolation leads to discouragement and does not allow the gifts of each person to blossom. For years now, we have been inviting the young to take part in a "pilgrimage of trust on earth" as a way of helping them to be supported by one another. It enables them to realize that they are linked to many other young people by a common search for God, by a common hope, and by complementary commitments. We have done this, moreover, without creating an organized movement around our Community of Taizé.

20. In life's trials, little by little we realize that the source of joy does not lie in extraordinary abilities or great expertise, but rather in the humble giving of ourselves, in order to understand others with kind-heartedness. Joy is always there, lying in wait for us, when simplicity is united to kind-heartedness in our lives.